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Groups of countries in special situations: follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and strengthening its capabilities and its effectiveness, as well as the effectiveness of the United Nations system support provided to least developed countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/213 and paragraph 155 of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, which was endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 65/280. It reviews the original and the subsequent mandates of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and how the Office has translated its mandates into actions. The report also provides a brief summary of the United Nations system support targeting the least developed countries.

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I. Introduction

1. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 ("Istanbul Programme of Action"), in paragraph 155, elaborated on, inter alia, the mandates and responsibilities of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in assisting the Secretary-General in the effective follow-up to and monitoring of its implementation. In that regard, and with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office and strengthening its capabilities and effectiveness, as well as the effectiveness of the United Nations system support provided to the least developed countries, the Secretary-General was requested in the Programme of Action to prepare a report, in consultation with Member States and the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system, and to submit it with recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

2. In his report to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on the outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/66/134), held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, the Secretary-General, inter alia, briefly outlined the expanded responsibilities of the Office of the High Representative emanating from the Istanbul Programme of Action. By its resolution 66/213, the Assembly took note of that report, underlined that the Office should be provided with the necessary support to fulfil its mandates for the timely and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and recognized that the report of the Secretary-General to the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, as requested in paragraph 155 of the Programme of Action, should facilitate, inter alia, consideration by the Assembly of the ongoing resource requirements of the Office.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 66/213 and paragraph 155 of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

4. In the course of preparing the present report, a survey was conducted among the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations. Consultations with Member States were also undertaken in order to benefit from their collective views on the possible ways to translate the specific mandates of the Secretary-General, as provided by the Istanbul Programme of Action and other intergovernmentally agreed outcomes. Consultations were also undertaken with the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

II. Background, mandate and existing resource capacity of the Office of the High Representative

5. The General Assembly, by its resolution 56/227, established the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, with the main objective of ensuring a highly visible, efficient and effective follow-up and monitoring arrangement for the implementation of programmes of action for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The key functions of the

Office, approved by the General Assembly following the recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/645, para. 17), were as follows:

(a) To assist the Secretary-General in ensuring the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system, with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries at the country, regional and global levels;

(b) To provide coordinated support to the Economic and Social Council as well as the General Assembly in assessing progress and in conducting a periodic review of the implementation of the Programme of Action;

(c) To support, as appropriate, the coordinated follow-up of the implementation of the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;

(d) To undertake appropriate advocacy work in favour of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in partnership with the relevant parts of the United Nations as well as with civil society, the media, academia and foundations;

(e) To assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and other programmes and initiatives for landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(f) To provide appropriate support to group consultations of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

6. The Office of the High Representative is organized into four units, three of which deal with the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, and report to the Chief of the Policy Development and Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting Service, who in turn reports to the Director of the Office. The fourth, namely, the Advocacy and Outreach Unit is responsible for communication and outreach activities for the three groups of countries and reports directly to the Director of the Office, who in turn reports to the High Representative. Details of the current work to be undertaken by the Office are contained in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 (A/66/6 (sect. 10)). The programme of work comprises three subprogrammes:

(a) Subprogramme 1: Least developed countries. The primary objective is to enable least developed countries to overcome their vulnerabilities and build resilience so as to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the internationally agreed development goals; and to mobilize international support for their sustained economic growth and sustainable development;

(b) Subprogramme 2: Landlocked developing countries. The primary objective is to ensure effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;

(c) Subprogramme 3: Small island developing States. The primary objective is to foster the achievement of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation.

7. The initial regular budget of the Office of the High Representative for the biennium 2002-2003 was approved with 13 temporary posts, which were subsequently regularized for the following biennium. In addition, for the biennium 2004-2005, one new post at the D-1 level was established within the staffing complement of the Office (see General Assembly resolution 58/270 and A/58/6 (sect. 10)). In 2008, as part of its efforts to further improve the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates for the Organization's development-related activities and the corresponding efficiency of the Secretariat's capacity, the operational capacity of the Office was increased by three additional professional posts (see Assembly resolution 63/260).

8. During the past several years, the operational capacity of the Office of the High Representative has been strengthened on an "as required" basis through non-recurrent provisions, in order to ensure the timely delivery of the Office's responsibilities in line with its expanded mandates. Most recently, the Office has been strengthened with high-level expertise for the purpose of leading its substantive and analytical work in respect of least developed countries, in order to support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, raise international awareness about the special development challenges confronted by least developed countries and place them high on the global development cooperation agenda. Tasks in that regard have included the preparation of non-recurrent reports and publications on the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, which has involved leveraging the analytical strength of the United Nations system as a whole so that the comparative advantage of each part of the system can be harnessed to support the follow-up in a coordinated and coherent manner. It also includes coordinating efforts to prepare the annual report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved in implementing the Programme of Action.

9. The proposed programme budget for section 10, Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, for the biennium 2012-2013 (A/66/6 (sect. 10)) amounts to $7.3 million, with a staffing complement comprising 18 posts, including 1 at the level of Under-Secretary-General. Outputs include: substantive servicing of intergovernmental meetings; parliamentary documentation; recurrent and non-recurrent publications; booklets, fact sheets, wall charts, information kits; special events; and the website. It will be recalled that for the biennium 2012-2013, the approved programme budget resources of the Office of the High Representative represent approximately 0.14 per cent of the total approved programme budget appropriations for the biennium 2012-2013 (see General Assembly resolution 66/248). As stated in the proposed programme budget for the Office (A/66/6 (sect. 10)), the Office anticipates that it will receive a further $1.5 million in extrabudgetary contributions to augment its regular budget resources.

10. Over the years, the mandate of the Office of the High Representative has expanded through various intergovernmental decisions to ensure effective and timely implementation of the programmes of action for the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. The demand for it to provide support to those vulnerable groups of countries has also increased considerably.

11. In its resolution 2004/65, the Economic and Social requested the Secretary-General to submit an annual progress report on the implementation of the

Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 ("Brussels Programme of Action") in a more analytical and results-oriented manner by placing greater emphasis on concrete results and indicating the progress achieved in its implementation, which could include the use of a matrix of achievements.

12. By its resolutions 63/227, 64/213 and 65/171, the General Assembly designated the Office of the High Representative as the focal point for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in order to ensure effective, efficient and timely preparations and to mobilize and coordinate the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system in the event.

13. In its resolution 66/213, the General Assembly invited, inter alia, the Office of the High Representative to actively support the least developed countries in integrating and implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action into their national policies and development framework. It also stressed that the Office should continue its awareness-raising and advocacy work in favour of least developed countries in partnership with the relevant parts of the United Nations system, as well as with parliaments, civil society, the media, academia and foundations, and provide appropriate support to group consultations of least developed countries.

14. In respect of landlocked developing countries, the Almaty Programme of Action requested that the Office of the High Representative to, inter alia, enhance its cooperation and coordination with organizations within the United Nations system, particularly those engaged in operational activities on the ground in landlocked and transit developing countries, to ensure the effective implementation of the Programme of Action in line with General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. The Programme of Action also indicated that the Office would continue to carry out advocacy work to mobilize international awareness and focus attention on its implementation of the Programme of Action.

15. In its resolution 60/208, the General Assembly requested the United Nations system organizations to continue their efforts to establish effective indicators to measure progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

16. In its resolution 66/214, the General Assembly decided to hold a comprehensive 10-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. The Office of the High Representative was designated as the United Nations system-wide focal point for the preparatory review process.

17. In respect of the small island developing States, the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation in its paragraph 102, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Office of the High Representative continued to mobilize international support and resources for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States ("Barbados Programme of Action"), in accordance with its mandate.

18. In its resolution 57/262, the General Assembly called upon, inter alia, the United Nations system in general and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in particular, as well as the Office of the High Representative, to put in place modalities at the international level that would facilitate an international meeting in 2004 as well as relevant regional and interregional preparatory meetings in a timely manner. In resolution 58/213, the Assembly called upon the Office to fulfil its mandate and to advocate strongly, in partnership with the relevant parts of the

United Nations as well as with major groups, the media, academia and foundations, for the mobilization of international support and resources for the successful outcome of the International Meeting and for the follow-up to the outcomes of the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action.

19. In its resolution 63/213, the General Assembly decided that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the High Representative and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system should organize, facilitate and provide necessary support to the review process at the national, regional and international levels in preparation for the 2010 high-level review; and stressed that the review should provide an opportunity to conduct an assessment of the progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and agree on what needed to be done to further address the vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

III. Review of the programme of work of the Office of the High Representative

20. The establishment of the Office of the High Representative has brought the issues facing least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to high visibility at the political level. The Office has also contributed to forging consensus at the global level about the specific development needs and challenges of the countries in those respective groups.

21. The activities of the Office of the High Representative towards system-wide coordination on issues relating to such countries has contributed to mobilizing all relevant entities in support of the three programmes of action under its mandate. The Office, several United Nations system organizations and other entities have jointly implemented and continue to jointly implement advocacy, capacity-building and resource mobilization activities. Furthermore, United Nations system activities in the areas of transit transport and trade facilitation, which had previously been conducted under separate regional and subregional initiatives, have been brought under one global framework.

22. The Office of the High Representative has made considerable effort to enhance the coordination and coherence of the United Nations system support to least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, in particular through the establishment of inter-agency consultative group mechanisms and interaction with CEB, the High-level Committee on Programmes, the Senior Management Group, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group.

Monitoring and reporting

23. Monitoring of and reporting on the progress made in the implementation of the programmes of action for the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries are among the core mandates of the Office of the High Representative. The Office prepares analytical and result-oriented reports on least developed countries for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

on an annual basis, as well as annual analytical reports on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for the Assembly.

24. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/44, and with a view to undertaking effective follow-up to and monitoring of the Brussels Programme of Action, the Office of the High Representative coordinated the development of a number of indicators for its implementation. Following the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Office of the High Representative, with the support and cooperation of other international organizations, developed a new set of indicators to measure the rate of progress in achieving the broader objectives and the 47 goals and targets under the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action. A total of 121 distinct quantitative indicators have been identified.[1]

25. During the midterm reviews of the Brussels Programme of Action in 2006 and the Almaty Programme of Action in 2008, the Office of the High Representative initiated the setting up of inter-agency consultative group mechanisms for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the respective programmes of action on a system-wide basis. The inter-agency consultative groups on least developed countries and landlocked developing countries operate under the leadership of the High Representative who chairs and coordinates the respective sessions of the groups. The groups function outside the CEB framework, have met annually to review ongoing organizational matters related to the implementation of the respective programmes of action and take a collective decision on further practical steps that may be required by the international community in that regard. In respect of the preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the meetings were held biannually on an ad hoc basis.

26. The sixth session of the Inter-agency Group on Least Developed Countries was held in Geneva in December 2011 and was attended by 30 organizations of the United Nations system, the regional commissions and relevant offices of the Secretariat. At that session, the Group endorsed a detailed road map for the implementation of specific activities under the Istanbul Programme of Action, indicating specific target dates and entities responsible for the implementation of the activities,[2] and decided to monitor the Programme of Action on a semi-annual basis, beginning in 2012.

27. The seventh session of the Inter-agency Group on Landlocked Developed Countries was held at United Nations Headquarters in February 2012. It reviewed and agreed on the scope and parameters of the preparatory process for the comprehensive 10-year review conference on the Almaty Programme of Action. The Office of the High Representative also plays an active role and contributes to the activities of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, which meets regularly under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

[1] See www.unohrlls.org/en/ldc/962/.

[2] See www.unohrlls.org/en/ldc/967/.

Support to intergovernmental processes

28. Providing support to the intergovernmental processes is the core responsibility of the Office of the High Representative. It extends substantive support to the intergovernmental negotiations being held within the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on matters within its purview. The Office often provides substantive, analytical and technical support to the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries in respect of their priority concerns, including new and emerging issues. The Office assists them in organizing annual ministerial meetings to help them to foster coordinated positions during the sessions of the Assembly. The annual reviews, midterm reviews and the periodic United Nations conferences on least developed countries and landlocked developing countries have been supported by the Office through substantive backstopping, including by preparing concept papers, background documentation and reporting. Occasionally, the Office also provides research and analytical papers on the new and emerging challenges and issues of special concern to the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries.

29. The Office of the High Representative organized 19 pre-conference events for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. As a result of such efforts and a strong promotional campaign, the Conference received a high degree of visibility.

30. The comprehensive outcome document of the Conference, the Istanbul Programme of Action, brought about a qualitative shift in the development strategy for the least developed countries for the next decade, setting an ambitious overarching goal of enabling half the number of those countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020.

31. In accordance with its expanded mandate, the Office of the High Representative enhanced in its outreach to all development partners in the preparatory process for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, effectively engaging intergovernmental bodies, United Nations system organizations and other international organizations, parliaments, civil society, the private sector, foundations and academia.

32. In respect of the landlocked developing countries, the Office of the High Representative served as the focal point in organizing the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation held in Almaty in 2003. The High Representative was designated as the Secretary-General of the Conference, which was the first of its kind to provide the international community with a unique opportunity to galvanize international solidarity and partnerships to assist landlocked developing countries in effectively participating in the international trading system, including by establishing transit systems.

33. In order to strengthen the analytical and negotiation capabilities of landlocked developing countries, the Office of the High Representative, in cooperation with the Office of Legal Affairs, prepared a multilateral agreement on the establishment of a think tank, which was endorsed at a ministerial meeting of landlocked developing countries held in New York in September 2010. The agreement is now open for ratification by those countries at the United Nations.

34. The most significant results achieved for landlocked developing countries have been the wider recognition of the special needs of that group of countries and the much stronger engagement of development partners with respect to transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation, as well as aid, debt relief and market access. Multilateral and development institutions and regional organizations have allocated increased attention to and resources for the establishment of efficient transit systems. There has also been progress in terms of reducing the amount of time involved in export and import processes; simplifying and harmonizing customs procedures; and increased levels of infrastructure developments, as well as regional cooperation and integration. Despite some progress having been achieved, the challenges are still significant in terms of socioeconomic and infrastructure development and smooth trade facilitation, as detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/67/210).

35. As a part of its support to the intergovernmental processes regarding small island developing States, the Office of the High Representative played a pivotal role in the processes leading up to and during the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Port Louis in January 2005, including in respect of the then High Representative having been designated as the Secretary-General of the Meeting.

36. The Office of the High Representative has initiated closer cooperation between the United Nations country teams in the small island developing States located in the Pacific region and the permanent missions to the United Nations of those countries by facilitating consultations through, for example, videoconferences and other means of telecommunication. The Office has also been working on facilitating such consultations between the small island developing States in the Caribbean and their respective permanent missions to the United Nations.

37. The support by the Office of the High Representative to the group consultations of countries in special situations at the Headquarters has increased considerably in volume and complexity over the past several years. Each group of countries in special situations currently holds one or two such meetings on a monthly basis.

Advocacy and outreach

38. Since 2001, the Office of the High Representative has embarked on a global outreach campaign to highlight the challenges facing least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Through its Advocacy and Outreach Unit, the overarching campaign strategy has utilized various communications tools to disseminate information to relevant stakeholders. To ensure the timely distribution of information on the three groups of vulnerable countries, a comprehensive website (www.un.org/ohrlls) has been in operation since the establishment of the Office.

39. To further enhance the implementation of its outreach mandate, the Office of the High Representative regularly produces and distributes a series of printed information materials relevant to the three groups of countries. The printed materials include press releases issued by the High Representative, brochures, fact sheets containing the most recent statistical information available and advocacy booklets. In order to apprise its constituencies of its ongoing work, the Office produces a quarterly newsletter/magazine in English and French.

40. On an intermittent basis, the Advocacy and Outreach Unit in close cooperation with the Department of Public Information contributes articles, op-eds and features to leading development newspapers in North America, Europe and Africa. In the lead-up to and during the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Advocacy and Outreach Unit in close cooperation with the United Nations Communication Group initiated a global campaign to raise the visibility of the Conference and the issues at stake for least developed countries. The Conference-specific strategy included extensive outreach to civil society and global media firms.

Mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the programmes of action

41. There has been a positive trend in the amount of resources made available to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States Net official development assistance disbursements to least developed countries has increased significantly over the past decade, from some $13 billion in 2001 to $44 billion in 2010. In the area of trade, the least developed countries have been enjoying preferential market access and special and differential treatment. International support to landlocked developing countries has also scaled up, with official development assistance increasing to $25 billion in 2010, from $12 billion in 2003. They are also receiving increased attention in the area of trade facilitation and aid for trade. Global attention and support to small island developing States has also increased over the years. The Office of the High Representative has been consistently reporting on the status of global support to the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries in the annual reports of the Secretary-General and other periodic documents.

42. Apart from mobilizing international support and resources, the Office of the High Representative has also raised extrabudgetary funds for its activities related to following up, monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the programmes of action for the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. In this regard, a trust fund for the least developed countries has been established within the Office to facilitate the effective delivery of its mandates. The trust fund is used to conduct relevant campaigns and advocacy activities in support of the Istanbul Programme of Action worldwide and to effectively engage all other actors, such as the private sector, civil society, parliaments and foundations, in the process. The trust fund is also used for facilitating the participation of national focal points from the least developed countries in the annual review meetings on the implementation of Istanbul Programme of Action by the Economic and Social Council as well as in seminars and workshops organized by the Office. Another trust fund has also been established to support the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The Office of the High Representative has provided support for the participation of the representatives of the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries in the midterm reviews of the respective programmes of action as well as for the participation of least developed country representatives in the substantive sessions of Council. For those purposes, the Office mobilized $12.4 million during the period 2002-2011 for the least developed countries and some $1.5 million during the period 2004-2011 for the landlocked developing countries.

Intergovernmental assessment of the programme performance of the Office of the High Representative

43. The programme performance reports of the Organization for the bienniums 2004-2005, 2006-2007, 2008-2009 and 2010-2011[3] reflected a high percentage rate of programme implementation in terms of delivery of outputs and results by the Office. The programme delivery by the Office for those four periods is provided in the table below.

	2004-2005	*2006-2007*	*2008-2009*	*2010-2011*
Number of outputs delivered	137	135	115	174
Implementation rate (%) of outputs mandated by legislation	80	83	89	100
Implementation rate (%) of total outputs mandated and added by the Secretariat	88	88	90	100
Ratio of all implemented outputs to outputs initially programmed (%)	146	151	117	110

44. The reports highlighted the programme implementation results of the Office by indicating the increased visibility of all three groups of countries in special situations and the greater awareness of, and increased attention paid by, the international community in respect of their special needs and concerns. They also reflected intensified advocacy efforts and enhanced coordination among the United Nations system organizations and other international organizations involved in channelling development assistance to countries in special situations and in ensuring the integrated follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the programmes of action at the national, regional and global levels.

45. In reviewing the programme performance reports for the bienniums 2004-2005, 2006-2007 and 2008-2009, at its forty-sixth, forty-eighth and fiftieth sessions, respectively, the Committee for Programme and Coordination noted that the reports had provided comprehensive coverage of the implementation of, inter alia, the programmed activities under programme 8, Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, of the strategic framework of the Organization. In its reports on those sessions (A/61/16, A/63/16 and A/65/16), the Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 8, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, of the proposed biennial programme plan. In its resolutions 61/235, 63/247 and 65/244, the Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of Committee in that regard.

46. In response to General Assembly resolution 61/235, the Office of the Internal Oversight Services undertook an evaluation of the Office of the High Representative. In its evaluation report (E/C.51/2009/2) submitted to the Committee at its forty-ninth session, the Office of Internal Oversight Services concluded that the Office of the High Representative had contributed to the increased awareness of the special development needs of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, resulting in greater

[3] A/61/64, A/63/70, A/65/70 and A/67/77.

visibility of the respective programmes of action. At the same time, the evaluation indicated, inter alia, the need for better coordination of programme delivery between respective Secretariat offices. The Committee for Programme and Coordination agreed with the conclusion of Office of Internal Oversight Services on the need for better coordination and synergy to avoid the overlap between the offices concerned. By its resolution 64/229, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee.

IV. Review of the United Nations system support to the least developed countries

47. Since its establishment, the Office of the High Representative has made concerted efforts to mobilize the United Nations system to support the least developed countries. A strong, focused and well-designed campaign has resulted in the adoption of a number of specific programmes by the various United Nations agencies that specifically address those countries.

48. In paragraph 153 of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions, were invited to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates, building on the similar provisions contained in the Brussels Programme of Action. The organizations were invited to participate fully in the reviews of the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

49. The survey conducted by the Office of the High Representative on the activities undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system (see para. 4 above) demonstrated a high level of involvement in the implementation of the Programme of Action, with some organizations setting up specific programmes to target the least developed countries and participating in joint programmes with other offices of the Secretariat and with the United Nations system organizations, as appropriate. Most of the United Nations system organizations have specific funds and programmes earmarked for the least developed countries.. Approved programme budget resources under section 10, Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, have increased from $3.1 million for the biennium 2002-2003 (see A/58/6 (sect. 10) to $7.3 million for the biennium 2012-2013 (see General Assembly resolution 66/248, sect. A).

50. The United Nations Capital Development Fund is mandated to promote economic development in the least developed countries. It provides support through capital grants and loans as well as by ensuring that financial services reach poor people and small businesses. In 2011, the Fund initiated 55 joint country programmes in the least developed countries, of which 26 are in landlocked developing countries and 6 are in small island developing States. In addition, it is operating eight regional and two global programmes targeting those countries.

51. The Committee for Development Policy undertakes triannual reviews of the list of least developed countries, on the basis of which it makes recommendations to the Economic and Social Council to identify the countries that should be included in

the list and those that are eligible for graduation from the list. It also monitors the development progress of graduating and graduated countries and includes the findings in its annual reports to the Council. The Committee secretariat has launched an information portal[4] aimed at facilitating access to information related to the existing international support measures that target least developed countries.

52. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has a division that specifically addresses the development challenges of least developed countries in the context of three pillars, namely: (a) intergovernmental deliberations and consensus-building through the Trade and Development Board; (b) research and analysis on key and emerging development issues; and (c) technical assistance in response to the needs expressed by its member States, including from least developed countries.

53. The Economic Development and New Partnership for Africa's Development Division of the Economic Commission for Africa is tasked in particular to promote economic growth and social development with a special emphasis on least developed countries, in line with the Istanbul Programme of Action. In 2009, the Millennium Development Goals/Least Developed Countries Section was created within the Division to address the special needs of least developed countries. In 2011, the Section developed an online monitoring tool to track the progress of the least developed countries in respect of the related programmes of action.

54. The Countries with Special Needs Section within the Macroeconomic Policy and Development Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is dedicated to supporting the improved capacity of the least developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It also provides cutting-edge analyses on related issues and undertakes advocacy work at the national and regional levels. In December 2011, ESCAP adopted a regional road map on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

55. Many other organizations of the United Nations system pay special attention to the development needs of the least developed countries through tailored technical cooperation programmes or by earmarking a proportion of their budgets for those countries. For example, the revised target for resource allocation from the core United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) budget for the period 2004-2007 stipulated that between 60 and 62 per cent of the budget should be allocated to least developed countries. Around 70 per cent of the operational budget of the World Food Programme (WFP), which amounted to around $2.6 billion in 2010, is targeted for least developed countries. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) allocated 49.3 per cent of its resources to the countries in 2011. The amount of programme assistance provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to least developed countries in 2011 totalled approximately $2.9 billion. According to a decision by the UNICEF Executive Board in 2008, at least 60 per cent of its core resources would be directed to least developed countries. Another case in point, referred to in the *Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures*, is the United Nations Development Account project on "Capacity-building for graduation strategies for least developed countries in Asia and Africa" for the period 2008-2011.

[4] http://webapps01.un.org/ldcportal/web/guest/home.

56. The Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance, including for Human and Institutional Capacity-Building, to Support Least Developed Countries in Their Trade and Trade-Related Activities represents an important initiative in support of the least developed countries. The multi-donor programme, which supports those countries in becoming more active players in the global trading system, involves six multilateral agencies: UNDP, UNCTAD, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Trade Centre. The Integrated Framework was superseded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries in 2007.

57. The Least Developed Countries Fund, operated by the Global Environment Facility, has supported the preparation and implementation of national adaptation programmes of action. As at December 2011, the Fund had approved some $217 million for related projects and had mobilized more than $919 million in cofinancing. The Fund has enabled 48 least developed countries to access resources for the preparation of their adaptation programmes.

58. The World Trade Organization has a specific organizational set-up to deal with the least developed countries. Its subcommittee on the least developed countries addresses, among other areas, issues related to market access, trade-related technical assistance, capacity-building initiatives; the mainstreaming of the trade-related elements of the Istanbul Programme of Action into its work; the participation of least developed countries in the multilateral trading system; the accession of least developed countries to WTO; and follow-up to WTO ministerial decisions/ declarations.

59. Although the World Bank does not use the least developed countries category of the United Nations, virtually all of those countries are eligible for International Development Association assistance. During its fifteenth replenishment meeting, covering the period 2009-2011, the Association provided about $20 billion to the least developed countries, which represents almost half of the total commitments of the Association.

60. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has a special organizational programme and mandate to assist the Governments of the least developed countries to implement policies that would allow them to use the intellectual property system to their best advantage.

61. At the United Nations system level, CEB, issued a statement on the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at its first regular session of 2011 (see CEB/2011/1, annex). By the statement, CEB indicated the commitment of the United Nations system organizations to supporting productive capacity- building in the least developed countries. At its twenty-second session, held in New York on 15 and 16 September 2011, the High-level Committee on Programmes issued a statement indicating the commitment of its member organizations to implement at the Istanbul Programme of Action in a coherent and synergistic manner (see CEB/2011/6, annex). It also expressed the commitment of its member organizations to integrating the Programme of Action into the work programmes of the United Nations system and participating fully in its review at national, subnational, regional and global levels.

62. The survey undertaken by the Office of the High Representative highlighted practices and commitments by the organizations of the United Nations system in respect of setting up and implementing joint development support programmes. The executive boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP) met in January 2012 to discuss and agree on a collaborative contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. They identified four joint thematic tasks in that regard,[5] confirmed their full commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and agreed that its implementation would be fully factored into their new strategic plans and annual work programmes.

63. In a similar way, a number of United Nations entities have already taken decisions to mainstream the Istanbul Programme of Action and integrate its provisions into their work programmes, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Telecommunication Unit (ITU), the United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNCTAD, UNDP, ESCAP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNOPS, UN-WOMEN, WFP, WIPO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). For other organizations, the issue will be on the agenda of the next meeting of their governing bodies.

64. United Nations system support, along with other factors, has contributed to progressive improvement in the development of least developed countries. For them as a group, the past decade has been marked by particularly strong growth acceleration, their total volume of exports has almost doubled, and there has been rapid progress in universal primary education and gender equality in school enrolments. Progress has also been made by least developed countries in mobilizing domestic resources so as to ensure the sustainability of funding for national development priorities. South-South development cooperation has expanded beyond the expectations envisioned in the Brussels Programme of Action. However, significant challenges persist. Least developed countries still have a long way to go before they can fully achieve economic, social and environmental development, poverty eradication, employment generation, structural transformation and graduation from least developed country status.

Challenges to be addressed

65. At the system-wide level, the inter-agency consultative groups are used as informal mechanisms for discussions and collaborative actions for the implementation of the respective programmes of action. The fact that they have not been institutionalized and do not have structured accountability and reporting mechanisms does not allow for the full realization of their potential in mobilizing the United Nations system to implement the programmes of action. At the regional level, although ESCAP and ECA have undertaken their own plans to support the

[5] The four thematic tasks are (a) building national capacities for effective delivery of basic services; (b) mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action in national plans and programmes; (c) helping youth develop and (d) strengthening resilience, including to climate change.

implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, there is still room for full engagement by all United Nations entities and regional organizations to assist least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in that regard. At the national level, while efforts have been made to make the United Nations system more coherent, effective and efficient by introducing "Delivering as one" pilot initiatives, the process remains limited since only eight countries have volunteered to become "Delivering as one" pilots. Three of them are least developed countries and one has just graduated from the list.[6] There are also 21 "self-starter" countries that have followed the "Delivering as one" approach, 8 of which are least developed countries.[7]

66. The survey conducted by the Office of the High Representative has brought to the fore that several of the organizations do not have specific legislative mandates in relation to least developed countries and that they do not accord special treatment to or implement tailored-made programmes for the groups of countries in special situations. On an organizational side, not all of them have set up a specific focal point or a specific organizational unit within their respective organizational structures to monitor the implementation of the programmes of action at an agency level. There is also a pressing need for streamlining and standardizing the reporting processes on the delivery of the development assistance by the United Nations system organizations to ensure availability of information in a comparable manner.

V. Expanded mandates of the Office of the High Representative and the need for strengthening its capabilities and effectiveness

67. The Istanbul Programme of Action has elaborated on the partnerships of least developed countries, including donor countries, developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation, parliaments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system. Being charged with the key responsibility to assist the Secretary-General in the effective follow-up of the programmes of action, the High Representative needs to vigorously pursue the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action in a coordinated and coherent manner involving all relevant stakeholders, with a view to ensuring their full, effective and timely implementation at the national, regional and global levels. It also needs to continue to provide appropriate support to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation.

68. In resolution 66/213, the General Assembly underlined the need for giving particular attention to the issues and concerns of the least developed countries in all major United Nations conferences and processes. The Group of Least Developed Countries often meets on a number of important issues in the areas of development and related fields, including new and emerging issues. The Istanbul Programme of Action has reaffirmed the mandate to provide appropriate support to the group consultations of least developed countries. The Office of the High Representative can take a lead in preparing substantive documents highlighting the priorities,

[6] Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

[7] Bhutan, Comoros, Ethiopia, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali and Samoa.

challenges and opportunities for such countries in relation to important issues under consideration by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

69. In the context of its substantive support to the group consultations by the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries, as well as the substantive coordination of the activities of the relevant task forces and working groups, there is increasing demand for the Office of the High Representative to prepare substantive documents on specific subjects, which requires a higher level of research on the issue under consideration. Such specific responsibilities call for maintaining a limited research capacity within the Office in order to ensure availability of substantive support to the groups as well as other coordination mechanisms in a timely manner.

70. It should also be noted that in line with resolution 66/213, the Office of the High Representative has extended organizational and substantive support to the ad hoc working group to further study and strengthen the smooth transition process for the countries graduating from the least developed country category. In its report (A/67/92), the working group suggested that the Office play a more active role in coordinating United Nations support and advocating for more comprehensive support for graduating and graduated countries, and recognized that the Office had a leading role to play in attuning the United Nations system and other partners to the issue of smooth transition.

71. With a view to undertaking effective follow-up to and monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, it is necessary to develop quantifiable indicators against its agreed goals and targets and to establish and maintain a database of indicators for those purposes.

72. In considering the importance of acquiring new technologies and building domestic capacity and knowledge bases, the General Assembly, in resolution 66/213, requested the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary to undertake a joint gap and capacity analysis on a priority basis by 2013 with the aim of establishing a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries, building on the existing international initiatives. The Office of the High Representative, in its efforts to implement the above mandate, established an inter-agency task force to draw on the expertise that exists within the United Nations system and is in need of strengthened capacity to support the activities of the task force.

73. The additional responsibilities delegated to the Office of the High Representative, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 66/213, include the need for the Office to help the least developed countries to conceptualize and elaborate their development frameworks, in collaboration with their development partners and relevant United Nations system organizations, in order to promote implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. That involves organizing appropriate forums, such as seminars and expert meetings, aimed at facilitating the integration of the provisions of the Programme of Action into the national policies of least developed countries.

74. The consultations with Member States conducted in the context of the preparation of the present report have also highlighted a need for intensified efforts by the Office of the High Representative in assisting the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries in achieving the goals established by the

respective programmes of action, in particular by identifying the challenges faced by those groups of countries and suggesting appropriate remedial measures to address them. Some delegates have suggested that the Office should be more vigorous in its efforts to mobilize the international community in implementing the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation..

75. The Office of the High Representative has ascertained that the implementation of its work programme stemming from the Istanbul Programme of Action, as elaborated in the related road map, would require delivery of 205 final outputs during the biennium 2012-2013. This represents an approximate increase of 10 per cent in the volume of outputs to be delivered against the level already achieved in the biennium 2010-2011, and is significantly higher than those in the previous bienniums.

76. The new and expanded mandates, as articulated in the preceding paragraphs, require the strengthening the Office of the High Representative, in particular in the areas of facilitating, implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Istanbul Programme of Action. They also emphasize the enhanced role of non-governmental stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector. The increased scope of the Istanbul Programme of Action in terms of priority areas and the increased number of goals and targets require activities in those additional areas for which increased inter-agency cooperation and advocacy are also needed.

77. During its sixty-sixth session, the General Assembly reinstated the non-recurrent provisions under section 10, Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States of the biennium 2010-2011 in order to support the preparatory work for Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries for the biennium 2012-2013, having recognized the ongoing needs to implement the follow-up activities of the Conference and other development activities. The newly established recurrent requirements are sufficient to cover the amount necessary to provide for three professional positions (1 P-4 and 2 P-3 positions) under general temporary assistance and other operational requirements for the remainder of the biennium 2012-2013. The provision of resources under general temporary assistance offers the Office of the High Representative the flexibility to determine and thereby optimize its use of the approved resources to meet evolving needs in respect of the initial follow-up to the Conference. The resources largely cover the additional requirements to support the Office in fulfilling its new and expanded mandates in that regard. In respect of the biennium 2014-2015, the requirements will be reviewed within the context of the overall proposed programme budget for that biennium.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

78. **Despite the fact that some progress has been achieved, the coordination and coherence of support provided to the least developed countries by the United Nations system organizations and other international organizations needs to be further strengthened. The United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions should further intensify their cooperation, collaboration and coordination efforts, including through greater harmonization and consistency of strategic frameworks, instruments, modalities and partnership arrangements, in full accordance with the priorities**

of the recipient Governments. The "Delivering as one" initiative has shown, in practical ways, how national ownership and leadership in the operational activities of the United Nations system can be strengthened and how the United Nations system can deliver better for all.

79. **With a view to ensuring wider recognition of the needs of the least developed countries, all United Nations system organizations and other relevant international organizations should take the necessary steps to accord special priority to the least developed countries within the context of their legislative mandates. Organizations that have not yet done so should take specific legislative decisions to fully integrate the Istanbul Programme of Action into their operational mandates.**

80. **Although the United Nations development system provides important support to the least developed countries, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries confirmed that international support measures should be strengthened, given the degree of challenges that those countries have been facing. The United Nations system should therefore scale up its substantive and technical assistance to the least developed countries in a timely, long-term, predictable and flexible manner. The United Nations system should also play an active and catalytic role in representing the voice of those countries at the forums where they are not represented.**

81. **In order to ensure consistent coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the programmes of action at the agency level, the organizations of the United Nations system that have not yet done so should set up specific focal points or organizational units within their secretariat structures.**

82. **The inter-agency consultative group mechanisms on the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States have already proved their efficiency in mobilizing the organizations of the United Nations system to implement the programmes of action. The groups should be institutionalized within the framework of the High-level Committee on Programmes as standing inter-agency mechanisms in charge of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the programmes of action on a system-wide basis. The consultative groups should finalize their respective terms of reference as soon as possible for approval by the Committee. In addition, the groups should periodically report to the Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the programmes of action by the United Nations system as a whole.**

83. **The Integrated Implementation Framework** (available from http://iif.un.org), **launched by the Secretary-General in June 2012, is a web portal that can record in an integrated, unified and comprehensive manner, the delivery of commitments made by each development partner of the Istanbul Programme of Action, including developed countries, developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation, the United Nations system, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, within the overall framework of Millennium Development Goals. Achieving that objective would, however, require a concerted effort on the part of the United Nations system to reorganize the**

reported data in line with the parameters of the Integrated Implementation Framework.

84. **Since its establishment, the responsibilities of the Office of the High Representative have increased considerably in their scope and complexity. In addition to its original mandate, the requirement to provide substantive and technical support to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States has increased and currently represents a mandatory activity of the Office. The substantive and technical support provided to group consultation processes has also expanded considerably, as compared with earlier periods.**

85. **In respect of the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has requested that a detailed description of the Office's new donor strategy be included in the proposed programme budget for 2012-2013 (see A/64/7, para. IV.24). The new donor strategy, however, was not reflected in the proposed budget for the biennium 2012-2013, owing to the limited time frame between the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the agreement on a road map within the inter-agency consultative group mechanism, which forms the basis of the donor strategy, and the submission deadlines for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. As explained during the intergovernmental proceedings, a new donor strategy would be finalized reflecting the outcomes and recommendations of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (see A/66/6 (sect. 10), table 10.13). At the time of the writing of the present report, the donor strategy remains under development and will be used by the Office of the High Representative as a guideline within which to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to complement resources from the regular budget to finance its activities.**

86. **The Office of the High Representative, in cooperation with other organizational entities will be assisting the least developed countries in mainstreaming the Istanbul Programme of Action into their national policies and programmes, in line with the provisions of paragraph 2 of resolution 66/213. It should be noted, however, that such activities would involve significant increases in the responsibilities of the Organization and other actors to organize and conduct workshops, seminars and other activities at the global, regional and nation levels, as detailed in section III above. It should also be noted that, traditionally, such activities have been predominantly financed from extrabudgetary contributions and that the present level of funds available may prove to be insufficient, given the anticipated increase in such activities.**

87. **Without sufficient resources in the trust funds for the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries, the Office will not be able to realize its original and subsequent expanded mandates. Member States are therefore urged to encourage donor countries, as well as other countries in a position to do so, to substantially increase their extrabudgetary contributions for effective follow-up to the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action.**